

# God's Perfect Timing – Christmas Message 2017

Text: Gal 4:4-5

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## Introduction:

Well, it's Christmas time again and generally it is a happy time. A time for celebration, a time for joy, a time for good will and good cheer. But we all know it can be a very stressful time also... amen?

*-Shopping for gifts / getting to the necessary holiday parties / putting up the decorations / baking holiday goodies and meals / wrapping gifts / decorating the Christmas tree and house / fighting holiday traffic / figuring out how to celebrate Christmas with both sides of the family without offending either / untangling the strands of Christmas lights / sending out Christmas cards / getting presents for everyone / and discovering some frightening words: ASSEMBLY REQUIRED / and discovering even more frightening words: BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED! Isn't Christmas a wonderful time of year???*

*Some people go to a lot of effort at this time of year to make sure their house looks just perfect.... And they begin months in advance! I remember a house that went all out with lights everywhere, it was so bright and flashy and fancy – there was a shortage of Christmas lights at the stores because this guy had bought them all for his house! But I loved the house next to him that could be bothered competing with his bright, flashy neighbour..... because he had written up this big sign placed on his roof, and the sign had an arrow pointing at his bright neighbours house saying, "DITTO". Love it!! But Christmas lights gives us a wow feeling, doesn't it, of a special time of year, of a better world, a friendlier world.*

A. For us Christians, Christmas is special because it celebrates the birth of Jesus. And because of Him, it is also a time when we can envision a world the way it could & ought to be. **Illustration:** *There was an article a few years ago in which a man gave his idea of a perfect world. He said, "In a perfect world you would feel as good at 60 as you did at 17. And you would be as smart at 60 as you thought you were at 17. In a perfect world," he said, "potato chips would have calories, but if eaten with dip, the calories would be neutralized." That was his idea of a perfect world.*

What would make this a perfect world for you? Ice cream that's good for the heart? Apple pies that prevent cancer? Cheese cake that helps take off kilos – especially around the hips? I can think of all kinds of things for my perfect world.

B. Since we're thinking about perfect things, notice what **Galatians 4:4-5 says, "But when the time had fully come God sent His son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."** In that passage we find 3 perfect things: Perfect timing - when the time was exactly right. The perfect gift - God sent His Son. And the perfect purpose - to redeem us.

C. But this morning let's focus on the perfect timing. Paul says, **"...the time had fully come."** Now in the Greek language there were two words for "time". One is "kairos" which means "opportune time" – an opportunity that comes your way, that just pops up - maybe quite by accident, or maybe an appropriate, appointed, destined time. Then there's "kronos" from which comes our word "chronology" - the orderly progression of events, when everything follows its proper sequence. And that is the word used in Galatians 4:4, indicating that God didn't decide on the spur of the moment to take advantage of an opportune time. But rather, God planned & orchestrated the sequence of events, & when the time was just right, He sent His only begotten Son into the world.

**Acts 17:26 says, "From one man God made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; He determined the times set for them & the exact places where they should live."** That scripture simply says, "God is in control."

**Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, "He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end."**

So your life & mine are in the hands of God. God keeps the clock. And **"God has made everything beautiful in its time."** Now let's think about God's perfect timing in the O.T., & in the life of Jesus Christ, & in our lives, too.

## **I. GOD'S PERFECT TIMING IN OLD TESTAMENT EVENTS**

First of all, notice God's perfect timing in Old Testament events.

A. In Genesis 24 is the story of Abraham's servant being sent back to their homeland, to the town of Nahor, to find a wife for his son Isaac. The servant felt the pressure of his assignment, & he didn't want to fail. So when he arrived there he knelt at the well of Nahor & he prayed that God would send the right young woman to the well, & that when he asked for a drink, she would also offer to water his camels. Now what do you think the odds are of that happening just that way? But that was his prayer. And as he was praying, the Bible says that Rebekah came to the well & filled her water jar. **"The servant hurried to meet her & said, 'Please give me a little water from your jar.' 'Drink, my lord,' she said, & quickly lowered the jar to her hands & gave him a drink. 'After she had given him a drink, she said, 'I'll draw water for your camels too, until they have finished drinking.'" (Genesis 24:17-19)** So at just the right time, & at just the right place God sent Rebekah to meet the servant, & she ends up becoming the wife of Isaac.

B. Then there's Joseph. Remember, he was the favourite son of Jacob, & grandson of Isaac. He had a coat of many colours, & his brothers were all jealous of him. So one time when he went out to see them, they decided to strip off his coat, throw him into a cistern & let him die. But at just the right time a caravan making its way to Egypt came by & they thought, "Why not make some money off this deal? Let's not leave him here to die, but let's sell him as a slave, instead." So they did. At just the right time Joseph arrived in Egypt. And at just the right time he interpreted Pharaoh's dream. And at just the right time, Joseph rose to great power in Egypt. And at just the right time the famine struck, & his brothers made their way to Egypt, & the family was reunited. Years later Joseph said it exactly right when he told them, **"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done." (Genesis 50:20)**

C. At just the right time the baby Moses was placed in a little basket & set afloat in the River Nile. And at just the right time Pharaoh's daughter came to bathe. And at just the right time the baby cried & Pharaoh's daughter heard his cries - & the result was that Moses grew up in the household of Pharaoh.

D. At just the right time David came to the battlefield & saw Goliath flexing his muscles, boasting of his power.

E. At just the right time, Esther was made queen when her people were about to be exterminated. And her Uncle Mordecai said to her, **"Who knows but that God has made you queen for just such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14)**

SUM. You see, God is in control. In Daniel 2:21 we find these words; **"God changes times & seasons; He sets up kings & deposes them."** We need to understand that God is in control of time. Nothing is happening in this world that is surprising to God. God never says, "Ooops! Wow, I never saw that coming!" No... God is in charge. And we see that in the many events of the O.T.

## **II. GOD'S PERFECT TIMING IN THE LIFE OF JESUS**

Secondly, we see God's perfect timing in the life of Jesus. Galatians 4:4 says, **"When the time had fully come, God sent His Son..."** The time was right.

*Illustration:* Now, when you give a special gift to someone you want the timing to be just right. I mean, you don't give an engagement ring to your girlfriend while eating French fries at McDonalds. No, you want everything to be just right. Then you pop the question.

A. So when God was ready to send His Son into the world everything had to be just right:

1. It was the right time culturally. Three centuries before Alexander the Great had conquered most of the known world, bringing with him Greek culture, Greek philosophy, & the Greek language. So by the 1st Century Greek was a universal language, the language of the common people, the NT books would be written in the Greek language which was the language that everyone could understand, just right for the quick spread of the gospel.

2. It was also the right time politically. By the 1st Century Rome had conquered most of the world, & a Roman named Octavian came into power. So powerful was he that the Roman Senate named him the ruler of Rome. But they didn't like the title "king," so they chose the title "Augustus," the "August One," Caesar Augustus. And he became the first Roman Emperor. Then when Luke tells about the birth of Jesus, he writes, **"In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world."** (Luke 2:1) God used a pagan government, a pagan emperor, & a pagan decree to make sure that Mary & Joseph made the 80-mile journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem so that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem - just as the prophets had foretold.

B. You can also see God's timing in the life of Jesus. Have you ever noticed, as you read the Gospels, how often you read the words, "the time has come," or "the time has not yet come"? For instance, **Mark 1:15 says, "The time has come. The kingdom of God is near."** You have to ask the questions....Whose time has come? Who is watching the clock? Who determined that this was the right time?

In **John 7:6**, his brothers encouraged Jesus to go down to Jerusalem & perform His miracles there. But Jesus says, **"The right time for me has not yet come."** In **John 7:30**, His enemies try to seize Him, but they are unable to do so. And the Bible says, it is **"...because His time had not yet come."** Whose time? You're absolutely right. It's God's time.

C. After the upper room experience, the breaking of bread & the initiation of the Lord's Supper, the whole language begins to change in the gospels & you read that the time has come. In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prays, **"Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you."** (John 17:1) To his disciples He says, **"The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners..."** (Mark 14:41).

Then He says to those who have come to arrest Him, **"This is your hour when darkness reigns"** (Luke 22:53). **Romans 5:6** says, **"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly."** **"At just the right time!"**

Timing with God is everything. If God was in control of timing during O.T. days, & if God was in control of timing during the life of Jesus, then I also believe God is still in control of timing now.

### **III. GOD'S PERFECT TIMING IN YOUR LIFE & MINE**

That brings up a very important question, "What about your life, & mine?" If you're a Christian, look back at your own conversion. I imagine that you can think of people & events, or words & circumstances that touched your heart, that conditioned your soul, that made your mind receptive to Jesus so that when the seed was planted in your heart it took root & started to grow.

It's amazing how God is able to co-ordinate things to happen in our lives for very good reasons.... And they are not 'coincidences', but rather GODcidences

*Illustration: I was amazed at someone's post on our church facebook site recently. Back in March 26 our church had a BBQ at Tygum park – some of you were there. David Sanders put up a photo on our facebook site. One person commented on that photo how she just happened to be in that same photo in the background at the same time that photo was taken. Recently that person has visited our church a couple of times and her name is Jongjong and she called it a "GODcidence".... Amen to that! I fully believe not in coincidence, but rather in GODcidence!*

Because that's how God works in our lives but it requires you to be patient. It requires you to keep trusting that God is working out His purposes in your life. It won't always be instant answers to your prayers. It doesn't always work out the way we hope it will. But here's the promise. No matter how difficult, no matter how tough life may be, no matter how disappointing things might be, God is still in control. The Bible says to you, **"Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him" (Ps. 37:7)**, and then in **Lamentations 3:25, "The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him."**

I want to challenge you this Christmas, and as you approach the New Year 2018, get closer to God than you have been before. Begin seeking Him as never before. And as you get nearer to Him, you will begin to get better acquainted with how God works, what things He is positioning in your life or around your life, you will begin to get more of a top-down, bigger picture perspective, and you will hear His voice when He prompts you to move.

### **CONCLUSION**

In **Romans 13:11** Paul writes, **"The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed."** **"Wake up!"** he says. If you're a Christian, rejoice. But if you're not a Christian, be concerned, because the clock is ticking, & there is not a lot of time left. One of these days we'll hear the trumpets blow, & we'll see the glory of God coming in the sky. Are you ready for that?

INVITATION: Have you asked yourself what time it is in your life? Do you have time to play with this morning? Or will you take advantage of this opportunity, realizing that in God's chronology He has led you to this moment when you can give your heart & your life to Jesus Christ? We extend His invitation. Will you come as we stand & as we sing?